

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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R 301345Z JUL 76

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4074

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0603

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS MILI ET

SUBJECT: INDICATIONS OF CONTINUING UNREST AMONG ETHIOPIAN MILITARY
IN ASMARA

REF: ASMARA 0595 (DTG 280620Z JUL 76)

1. THE NEWLY-APPOINTED CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR FOR ERITREA, COL. FIKRU, HAS YET TO ARRIVE IN ASMARA, ALTHOUGH THE LOCAL BRANCH OF MOFA INFORMED THE CONGEN HE IS EXPECTED THE MORNING OF JULY 31. IN HIS ABSENCE, THERE HAVE BEEN CONTINUING INDICATIONS OF UNREST AMONG THE MILITARY IN ASMARA, STEMMING FROM UNRESOLVED DIS-SATISFACTION OVER THE SUDDEN DEATH OF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR BG GETACHEW.

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2. SECOND DIV. HQ HAS IMPOSED SEVERAL MEASURES WHICH REFLECT A

CERTAIN INSECURITY, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE OFFICERS. ALL OFFICERS ARE WEARING FATIGUES AND ARE CARRYING SIDEARMS, THE LATTER MEASURE BEING QUITE UNCOMMON IN THE PAST. FURTHER, THE 2ND DIV. HAS LOCKED THE PRINCIPAL GATE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ETHIOPIAN SECTORS OF KAGNEW TRACT ECHO, AS THE CO OF THE SECOND DIV. EXPLAINED, TO PREVENT HIS OFFICERS AND MEN FROM LEAVING THE HQ AREA UNAUTHORIZED. COL. TELEHUN, THE CO, WAS ALSO OBSERVED TO HAVE A SOMEWHAT LARGER THAN USUAL CONTINGENT OF ARMED TROOPS IN HIS OFFICE AREA.

3. THE TROOPS OF THE SECOND DIV. APPEAR TO BE PRIMARILY OCCUPIED IN NON-COMBATANT TRAINING AND ATHLETIC ENDEAVORS. THEY ARE SOMEWHAT LESS CONSPICUOUS IN THEIR SECURITY ACTIVITIES AND ARE NOT KNOWN TO HAVE ENGAGED THE INSURGENTS IN THE ASMARA AREA SINCE GETACHEW'S DEATH. THE ONLY ONGOING RESPONSIBILITY THEY RETAIN BEYOND STATIONARY DEFENSE IS THE THREE WEEKLY CONVOYS TO MASSAWA AND RETURN. TROOPS OF THE FLAME DIV., RECENTLY RETURNED FROM RELIEF OPERATION IN THE KEREN AREA, HAVE BEEN OBSERVED IN THE SECOND DIV. HQ COMPOUND. MEANWHILE, RADIO ASMARA REMAINS OFF THE AIR.

4. THE COMBINATION OF THE BUSINESSLIKE ATTITUDE OF THE OFFICERS AND THE ATHLETIC EXUBERANCE OF THE TROOPS APPARENTLY CONCEALS AN ATMOSPHERE OF DISQUIET WHICH SPRINGS FROM STILL UNRESOLVED GRIEVANCES. THE ABRUPT EXECUTION OF GETACHEW AND SISAY, WHO ADVOCATED A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT TO THE FESTERING ERITREAN SITUATION, FOLLOWED BY THE REPORTED RECALL FROM ASMARA AND EXECUTION OF TWO POPULAR COLONELS, HAVE INTENSIFIED THE UNSETTLED CLIMATE. THE COLONELS, ONE THE CO OF THE AIRBORNE BN. AND THE OTHER A LIAISON OFFICER TO THE AIRBORNE WERE ELIMINATED FOR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN THE ANTI-DIRG POSITION ESPOUSED BY ELEMENTS OF THE PARATROOPS. THE DEPARTURE OF THE PARATROOPS FROM ASMARA FOR ADI UGRI ON JULY 19 NOW APPEARS MORE A MATTER OF THEIR OWN VOLITION THAN AS A RESULT OF ORDERS FROM SECOND DIV.

5. COMMENT: WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT, WITH COL FIKRU'S IMMINENT ARRIVAL, THE PICTURE IN ASMARA MAY COME INTO CLEARER FOCUS. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SOME PATTERNS ALREADY THAT HAVE CLEARLY EMERGED. FIRST THE OFFICERS OF THE SECOND DIV. ARE IN GRAVE FEAR FOR THEIR PROFESSIONAL FUTURES AND THEIR LIVES. SECOND, THE TROOPS SEEM TO REMAIN AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY TO THEIR OFFICERS WHO APPEAR TO BE CONFIDENTIAL

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ATTEMPTING TO WIN THEIR LOYALTY AND DEVOTION BY GIVING THEM EASY DUTY AND MINIMAL RISKS. THIRD, THE ARRIVAL OF FIKRU WILL SIGNAL A BELIEF IN ADDIS THAT THE SITUATION HERE IS SUFFICIENTLY STABLE, ESPECIALLY WITH THE INFUSION OF THE FLAME DIV. TROOPS, TO PERMIT THE RISK OF INSTALLING THE "DIRG'S MAN".

6. FOR ADDIS: WITH THE RECENTLY INCREASING SHIFTS IN MILITARY UNITS IN AND OUT OF ERITREA, IT WOULD BE MOST USEFUL IF THE DAO WOULD

AIRPOUCH THE LATEST COMPILATION OF EPMG ARMED FORCES INSIGNIA
AND SHOULDER PATCHES, ESPECIALLY THAT OF THE NEW FLAME DIV.
SLUTZ

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